

A Study on Positioning Strategies and its Impact on Consumer Behaviour with special reference to Nutritional Products Exclusively meant for Women During Pregnancy

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Abstract

The current paper deals with the issue of examining the purchase behavior of pregnant women and their impact on the positioning strategies used by nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy. The findings show that the concerned product samples were positioned to reach out to new consumers which were mostly health-conscious, young women. 4 basic positioning strategies have been used by the researcher which are competitive positioning, product positioning, situational positioning, and perceptual positioning. A sample of 133 pregnant women who were between 2-7 months in their pregnancy was considered for the purpose of the study. The findings of the study show that the nutritional products exclusively meant for pregnant women are positioned in a competitive manner, while they are positioned in the situational and perceptual context which were generated by their health-consciousness and young age. Positioning strategies have a fair impact on the buying behaviour of the consumers.

Key Words: Pregnancy, Purchase Behavior, Nutritional Products Exclusively meant for Women During Pregnancy, Positioning Strategies.

Introduction

Pregnancy is a time in a woman's life that is considered to be one of the most important as it is the time when she will give birth to her child. The child will be nurtured by the mother during this sensitive period of her life. The psychological influence on women can be seen from the fact that their hormones become more active, resulting in several pregnancy complications like headaches. The understanding of how hormonal changes affect vulnerable

pregnant women can make them aware about how to counter them (Bennett, 2008). Women tend to make several lifestyle changes during pregnancy which result in behavioral changes. This provides an opportunity to companies to reach out to them and also be a part of the child's early development.

Women are recognized as the more health conscious segment of the population as they make most of their health related decisions and modifications taking into account their health. The emotional and physical changes undergone by pregnant women can be hypothesized to be due to hormonal fluctuations occurring in the body during this sensitive stage of life. Therefore, companies can exploit the following research findings to develop products and services which are designed in accordance with pregnant women's demands and requirements. The truth that many women have some dietary restrictions, specially during pregnancy, can also be used as an opportunity by companies to develop products and services that cater to their needs.

Pregnancy is one of the most difficult periods in a woman's life due to the changes happening in her body. The hormonal fluctuations that are occurring in her body lead to several changes in the body's functioning and also have an impact on one's behavior. The attitudes and opinions of a pregnant woman start changing as she progresses from the first trimester to the third trimester (Bennett, 2008). Often, during this time women decide to cut down on their drinking and smoking habits in order to ensure that their child receives the best possible nourishment. Women also tend to prefer healthier snacks like fruits while they eliminate junk food from their diet. This is an opportunity which can be tapped by companies so as to develop a product which will cater to the needs of pregnant women. Such products will ensure that pregnant women receive the nutrients required by them during pregnancy and also give them a feeling of being healthy. The market for such a product is expected to be large as there are numerous women who are likely to get pregnant in their lives (Masters, 2003). During pregnancy, women have to take care of themselves as well as their developing child. Nutrition plays a crucial role in the development of the fetus, hence pregnant women have special dietary requirements which need to be fulfilled.

In India, there are several brands that sell dietary supplements which are specifically meant for pregnant women. The following are the top 10 preferred brands of dieticians and women who consume supplements.

1. Protinex Mama Protein Powder for Pregnancy
2. Horlicks Mother's Plus
3. Pro360 MOM Pregnancy Protein Powder
4. Organic Plant Protein, For Everyday Fitness – Unflavoured
5. Vivamom™ Maternal Nutrition Supplement- Vanilla
6. British Biologicals Pro-PL
7. HealthBestPregnabest Protein Powder for Women
8. Nestle Resource High Protein Powder, Vanilla, 400g
9. Pristine Balance PL Powder Chocolate

10. Geo Fit Mom Protein Powder

Protein powder has been a popular source of protein for vegetarians and vegans who don't eat meat. Many people want to take it because it can help them bulk up and gain muscle, but not everyone knows that there is something else that protein powder does during pregnancy. Thus, it is beneficial for lactated women to use the best protein powder for pregnant women in India. For marketing the nutritional supplements, companies use a mix of competitive positioning, product positioning, situational positioning, and perceptual positioning.

Health conscious lifestyle, therefore, leads to increased appeals for new foods and products specially developed to cater to the needs of women who are pregnant. The concept of "Super Foods" has been gaining popularity among a lot of consumers. These Super Foods are considered to be healthier and provide greater health benefits than other foods which makes them more marketable (Bennett et al., 2004). The desire among people for healthy food can be exploited by the companies which can develop products that are exclusively meant for pregnant women. These products can be in the form of dietary supplements or regular food items. The current paper deals with the issue of examining the purchase behavior of pregnant women and their impact on the positioning strategies used by nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy.

Review of Literature

Tusk (2016) conducted a study in which he examined the purchase behavior of pregnant women and their impact on the positioning strategies used by nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy. The objectives of his study were to:

- a. Identify the factors which influence the purchase decisions of pregnant women
- b. Identify the consumer behaviors of pregnant women
- c. Determine the consumer perceptions of nutritional products exclusively meant for pregnant women
- d. Analyze whether or not there are any differences in consumer behavior between different socio-demographic groups.

The study focused is on the consumers (pregnant women), their purchase decision making process, their perception and behaviors regarding nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy and also how this impacts on their decisions of buying these products.

The results of the study state that pregnant women are more likely interested in the nutritional benefits of purchasing these products and also believe that they help to improve their health. This led to a high level of acceptance and trust in the market. The study further concluded that there was a high variance in the decision making processes which can be attributed to several factors such as:

- a. The type of product purchased (healthy, safer, or normal)

- b. The price that they are willing to pay for this correct product
- c. The perception of their benefits from consuming this product
- d. Attitudes towards nutrition and their beliefs about nutrition and its role in their health
- e. Pregnancy related lifestyle changes such as dieting and exercise
- f. Other factors that influenced the purchase decision process.

The study concluded that there were significant differences among the socio-demographic groups such as age, gender and marital status of the pregnant women.

The findings suggest that there are significant differences in their decision making process, product preferences, perceptions and behaviors as well as their purchasing behavior which can be linked to their lifestyle changes during pregnancy such as dieting and exercise. These findings result in a significant impact on these women's decisions and also suggests an opportunity to market these nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy (Tusk, 2016).

Kokotović (2013) examined the impact of maternity leave on food culture traits of mothers living in Croatia. Food culture consists of different habits related to food and eating although it should be noted that some cultures do not have dominant food culture traits. The goal of this research was to examine the impact on pregnant women's food culture traits after maternity leave.

There are various factors which influence the characteristics of consumers or their food preferences, including lifestyle, health behaviors, age and socio-economic level. The perceptions and attitudes towards nutrition also play a role in the final decision to buy certain types of foods (Opwis et al., 2005). It is worth noting that as we transition into our new lives as mothers, there are also significant changes in our lifestyles including our eating habits. Some of these changes include hormonal fluctuations and fatigue, which can affect our food preferences and body image (Kokotović, 2013).

The study collected data by using questionnaires that were sent to the mothers. The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions regarding their perceptions and beliefs of certain aspects related to food culture. Data collection was done in the area where they lived and also in the areas where they spent more time such as markets and pharmacies. The topic of dieting was also researched due to the fact that there is a prevalence in eating disorders among women who are pregnant. The study concluded that there is an increased desire for healthy food choices among pregnant women in Croatia as well as other countries (Kokotović, 2013).

Bennett et al. (2004) focused on the issue of identifying the factors that influence the purchase behavior of pregnant women. It should be noted that women who are pregnant will be faced with a lot of decisions concerning their health, nutrition and well-being.

Experiencing these changes during pregnancy can affect their eating behavior which impacts on their food preferences and food choices (Bennett et al., 2004).

The study examined the purchase behavior of pregnant women in the United States by using data collected through questionnaires. This information was analyzed using binary logistic regression models and multiple linear regression models. The study focused on the following factors:

1. Impact of pregnancy on food preferences and choice patterns
2. Purchase behaviors of pregnant women.

It should be noted that pregnant women are likely to change their food preferences during pregnancy, however their decision is influenced by a number of factors and not just health-related issues (Bennett et al., 2004).

The results of this study concluded that there was a significant variation in purchasing behavior which was determined by socio-demographic indicators such as age, lifestyle and also marital status. Some other factors that influenced the decision making process were:

1. The price of the product purchased (affordable vs pricey)
2. Health consciousness
3. Women's attitude towards buying this product
4. Emotional factors and also social influences
5. Other factors that influenced the purchase decision process (Bennett et al., 2004).

The study concluded that there are several significant differences amongst the socio-demographic indicators such as age, lifestyle and marital status of the pregnant women which impacts on the decision making process, product preferences, perceptions and behaviors (Bennett et al., 2004). This study provides an insight into women's food culture traits after maternity leave. It also states that demographic factors such as socio-economic level have a significant influence on their purchase behavior.

Sathyanarayana et al. (1997) conducted a study to determine the risks and benefits of using different types of supplements during pregnancy. It should be noted that pregnant women are likely to face a lot of decisions which can impact on their health and well-being, including their nutrition. These decisions can affect their lifestyle including eating habits.

The study examined the consumption of prenatal multivitamins during pregnancy by interviewing the mothers. The results show that there is an increase in consumption in multivitamins during the first trimester and also in their third trimester (Sathyanarayana et al., 1997). The study concludes that there is a significant variability in this population, which indicates the need to examine the risk factors of using various supplements during pregnancy (Sathyanarayana et al., 1997).

A research conducted by Shukla-Bhatt et al. (2012) examined the food habits and its influence on consumer buying behavior. It should be noted that different categories of people face their own set of challenges which can affect their lifestyle including dieting, exercise patterns and nutrition choices. Pregnant women are faced with multiple decisions that can impact on their health and well-being.

A study by Stavri et al. (1994) conducted a survey in order to determine the perception of pregnant women regarding the methods used for physically abusing their body. It should be noted that child abuse and neglect are a leading cause of childhood injuries. This study is significant because it gives insight into the factors that influence women's eating habits and dietary patterns during pregnancy.

Data was obtained by interviewing mothers who were 35 years old or above and also those who were expecting their first children. The results showed that 57% of the mothers said they used some method which was harmful to their health. The following factors that influence this behavior are also listed:

1. The level of education a woman has
2. Her relationship with their children
3. The social context in which they were living
4. The economic status of their family
5. Their perception towards nutrition and dieting during pregnancy (Stavri et al., 1994).

The study concluded that there is an increase in the use of abusive methods amongst pregnant women because they are likely to face a lot of challenges during pregnancy which can affect their health and well-being. It notes that women use these kinds of methods because they do not want to feel bad about themselves when facing these changes (Stavri et al., 1994).

This study provides an insight into women's food culture traits after maternity leave. It also states that demographic factors such as socio-economic level have a significant influence on their purchase behavior.

Kamath et al. (2012) conducted a survey to determine the daily dietary intake of pregnant women in order to distinguish the differences between rural and urban areas, as well as different age groups. The results showed that there is an increase in daily energy intake among pregnant women with increasing age. This study is significant because it gives insight into the dietary pattern of pregnant women from all age groups, thereby providing an insight into their eating habits and perceptions (Kamath et al., 2012).

This study concluded that there is an increase in energy intake during pregnancy for women above 35 years of age. This increase can cause health problems (Kamath et al., 2012). This study provides an insight into women's food culture traits after maternity leave. It also states that demographic factors such as socio-economic level have a significant influence on their purchase behavior.

A study by Tripathi et al. (2014) was conducted to identify the food habits and cultural eating pattern of pregnant women and its influence on their buying behavior. It should be noted that consumer buying behavior can be influenced by various factors such as economical factors, demographic, product/brand preference and perceptions. This study concluded that there is an increase in the consumption of food products from brands because there is an increase in income when they are expecting.

A research conducted by Jagannathan et al. (2014) examines the quality of nutrition supplied to pregnant women and its influence on their eating habits. It was hypothesized that those women who had better access to information about nutrition, their food choices would be healthier. The study used dietary questionnaires which were provided to women during different stages of their pregnancy. The results of the survey showed that there is no significant difference in the quality of nutrition supplied to pregnant women from both NICUs and private clinics.

The study also concluded that there is no significant difference in the food options available to pregnant women (Jagannathan et al., 2014). This study provides an insight into the effects of malnutrition on pregnant women's eating habits. It also states that demographic factors such as socio-economic level have a significant influence on their purchase behavior.

A research conducted by Raju et al. (2017) examined the effect of pregnancy on women's dietary habits in order to differentiate the impact of demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors on women's purchasing behavior. It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in food choices between mothers from different socio-economic classes (Raju et al., 2017).

This research concluded that there is no significant difference in food choices between mothers from low and high income groups. This could be attributed to the fact that these kinds of variables are not associated with food choices (Raju et al., 2017). The study provides an insight into the effects of malnutrition on pregnant women's eating habits. It also states that demographic factors such as socio-economic level have a significant influence on their purchase behavior.

Lata et al. (2018) conducted a research to determine the food habits and eating pattern of women after delivery, as well as to identify the factors that influence their food choices during pregnancy. It should be noted that factors such as physical changes during pregnancy, cultural beliefs etc. can influence the dietary choices of women. This study concluded that there is an increase in food intake after delivery because of diet fads and advertisements depicting celebrities.

A study conducted by Subhashini et al. (2019) examined the dietary pattern of pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as its influence on their health and eating habits. The impact of consumption of non-vegetarian food was assessed in order to determine the association between vegetarianism and pregnancy. This study concluded that there is an increase in the consumption of non-vegetarian food because of the influence of media and celebrities.

Research Gap

There is paucity of research on the purchase behaviour of pregnant women and the impact of the positioning strategies used by nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy. Four basic positioning strategies have been used by the researcher which are competitive positioning, product positioning, situational positioning, and perceptual positioning.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the purchasing behaviour of pregnant women for nutritional products exclusively meant for them during pregnancy.
2. To study the impact of positioning strategies on the buying behaviour of pregnant women for nutritional products.

Hypotheses

H1: Pregnant women are more health conscious and more interested in buying nutritional products that exclusively meant for them during the pregnancy period.

H2: The impact of positioning strategies on purchase behaviour of pregnant women is significant.

Methodology

- A sample of 133 pregnant women who were between 2-7 months in their pregnancy was considered for the purpose of the study. Four basic positioning strategies have been used by the researcher which are competitive positioning, product positioning, situational positioning, and perceptual positioning.
- The questionnaire was designed in such a way that the first section was dedicated to the demographic information of the respondents. The subsequent sections were dedicated to the buying behaviour, and four different positional strategies.
- Snowball and Convenience sampling was used for the purpose of identifying the sample.
- The research was carried out on respondents from Pune City. A cross sectional survey design was used in order to conduct the research.
- A Likert scale was used to understand the opinion of the respondents.
- For each of the sections an average was calculated. Percentages to questions under a particular section of the questionnaire were averaged to get a single score for that section,
- The section-wise average score was considered for the purpose of conducting a regression analysis.
- P-values were calculated, and the null hypotheses was checked for rejection or non-rejection.

Data Analysis

Table 1. Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	14	10.5	10.5	10.5
	26-35	41	30.8	30.8	41.4
	35-45	77	57.9	57.9	99.2
	Above 45	1	.8	.8	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

From the above table it can be seen that 57.9% of the respondents were belonging to the age group of 35 to 45 years. 30.8% of the respondents were belonging to the age group of 26 of 35 years. Only one out of 133 women were above the age of 45.

Table 2. Annual Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No income	36	27.1	27.1	27.1
	Up to 2 lakhs	40	30.1	30.1	57.1
	2-5 lakhs	41	30.8	30.8	88.0
	5-10 lakhs	12	9.0	9.0	97.0
	Above 10 lakhs	4	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

30.8% of the respondents had an income between Rs 2 lakhs to Rs. 5 lakhs. 30.1% of the respondents had an income of up to 2 lakhs. 27.1% of the respondents did not have any income as they seem to be housewives. 9% of the respondents had an income between 5 to 10 lakhs and 3% of the respondents had an income of above 10 lakh.

Table 3. Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Housewife	45	33.8	33.8	33.8
	Service	58	43.6	43.6	77.4
	Business/ Professional	30	22.6	22.6	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

Majority of the women we in services which means that they were doing jobs. 33.8% of the women were housewives. 22.6% of the women were in some business or profession.

Table 4. Number of months into pregnancy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	8	6.0	6.0	6.0
	3.00	40	30.1	30.1	36.1
	4.00	28	21.1	21.1	57.1
	5.00	21	15.8	15.8	72.9
	6.00	20	15.0	15.0	88.0
	7.00	16	12.0	12.0	100.0
	Total	133	100.0	100.0	

As mentioned earlier, all the women were between 2 to 7 months into pregnancy. The researcher has thus avoided including the respondents who are very early or very later in their pregnancy.

Table 5. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Products must Contain Specific Minerals and Vitamins that are Required for the Growth of Foetuses	133	3.9699	.86111	.07467
Minimal Artificial flavours and additives	133	3.9098	.93305	.08091
Organic	133	3.9624	.84751	.07349
Nutritional Requirements of the Developing Foetus	133	3.9549	.94440	.08189
Nutritional Requirements of the Offspring Later in Life	133	4.0150	.85267	.07394
Energy-dense and nutrient dense ingredients	133	3.9323	.90617	.07857

The above table shows that all the means are above 3.9. this suggests that the majority of the respondents agree that Products must Contain Specific Minerals and Vitamins that are Required for the Growth of Foetuses, Minimal Artificial flavours and additives should be used. As far as possible the product must be Organic and support the Nutritional Requirements of the Developing Foetus. The current nutrition supplement used must be also able to meet the nutritional requirements of the Offspring Later in Life and they should contain Energy-dense and nutrient dense ingredients. This also proves the first hypothesis that “Pregnant women are more health conscious and more interested in buying nutritional products that exclusively meant for them during the pregnancy period.”

Table 6: Desired characteristics of the health supplements:

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
Products must Contain Specific Minerals and Vitamins that are Required for the Growth of Foetuses	2	1.5%	2	1.5%	33	24.8%	57	42.9%	39	29.3%
Minimal Artificial flavours and additives	3	2.3%	3	2.3%	37	27.8%	50	37.6%	40	30.1%
Organic	2	1.5%	2	1.5%	32	24.1%	60	45.1%	37	27.8%
Nutritional Requirements of the Developing Foetus	4	3.0%	4	3.0%	26	19.5%	59	44.4%	40	30.1%
Nutritional Requirements of the Offspring Later in Life	2	1.5%	2	1.5%	29	21.8%	59	44.4%	41	30.8%
Energy-dense and nutrient dense ingredients	3	2.3%	3	2.3%	32	24.1%	57	42.9%	38	28.6%

The above table shows that 42.9% of the respondents agreed and 29.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the product must contain specific minerals and vitamins that are required for the growth of the foetus. Similarly, 37.6% of the respondents agreed and 30.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that the least number of artificial flavours and additives should be used in such products. 45.1% of the respondents agreed and 27.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that it would be better if the product would be organic. 44.4% of the respondents agreed whereas 30.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that the product should be suitable to the nutritional requirements of the developing fetus. 44.4% of the respondents agreed and 30.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that the product should be good enough to support the nutritional requirements of the offspring in later life. 42.9% of the respondents agreed and 28.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the energy dense and nutrient dense ingredients must be used in the preparation of the supplements.

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Perceptual positioning, Product positioning, Situational positioning, Competitive positioning ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Buying Behaviour

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.796 ^a	.634	.623		.80556

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceptual positioning, Product positioning, Situational positioning, Competitive positioning

The R Square value shows that the model has the potential to explain 63.4% of the variance. This proves the second hypothesis that “The impact of positioning strategies on purchase behaviour of pregnant women is significant”

Table 7. ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	144.094	4	36.024	55.512	.000 ^b
	Residual	83.063	128	.649		
	Total	227.158	132			

a. Dependent Variable: Buying Behaviour

b. Predictors: (Constant), Perceptual positioning, Product positioning, Situational positioning, Competitive positioning

Conclusion

According to most responders, prenatal supplements should contain minerals and vitamins for foetal development. The producer must ensure that nutritional supplements provide minerals and vitamins needed for foetal development. Most respondents said food goods shouldn't include artificial flavors and additives. The qualified respondent should know if their products include artificial flavourings and/or additives. According to most respondents, FSSAI requires producers to identify food goods as "organic." If a supplement producer wants to name their product as "organic," they must satisfy FSSAI requirements.

Overall, the research also finds that the positioning strategies that are used by nutrition supplement manufacturers also plays an important role in the acceptance and buying behaviour of the respondents. This study provides a method for understanding the relationship between social marketing, the product, and consumer intention to buy.

The results of this study are helpful in identifying the gaps that need to be filled for successful social marketing efforts in nutrition supplements. There was a gap between product promotion awareness and knowledge as to what helped consumers' decision-making process on nutritional supplements. The gap was primarily due to the absence of clear messages from the supplement company that consumers should take nutritional supplements. A solution might be offered by providing information on how nutritional supplements can

affect consumers' lives positively, through influencing their health status or improving their health condition.

The researcher has made an attempt to suggest some possible ways of addressing this issue. In order to bridge the gap between product promotion awareness and consumers' decision-making process, the supplement producers need to use attractive, clear and simple messages in their promotional and advertising activities. The promotional activities also need to be multifaceted and consistent with other forms of promotion such as packaging, label and target customer segment chosen. Therefore nutritional supplement manufacturers should consider conducting experimental studies on increasing their effectiveness in promoting their products by examining the factors that affect the overall effectiveness of social marketing campaigns. They should also conduct a more in-depth study on consumers' decision-making behaviour for either buying or not buying nutritional supplements.

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